

not exceeding 1s. in the pound for any one year.

Here, then, we have for consideration a number of important questions, in the proper settlement of which all are interested.

DISCUSSION ON POLYCHROMATIC EMBELLISHMENTS.

THE paper on the Polychromy of Greek Architecture read at the Institute of British Architects on the 12th ult. and printed in our pages, has served as the text for a long and animated discussion at two following meetings of the Institute. We can only give an outline of what was said. On the 26th ult. Mr. Donaldson commenced the discussion. He said,—The great point of difference on the question of Polychromy would be found in the opinions entertained as to the extent of its application. The pamphlet which M. Semper had presented to the Institute at the last meeting showed, he believed, that that gentleman adhered to the opinion of M. Raoul Rochette, that the paintings of the Greeks were not properly mural paintings, but paintings upon tablets, which might be removed at pleasure. M. Hittorf, on the contrary, was of opinion that all the paintings, used externally and internally (except votive offerings), were, strictly mural, and formed part of the walls themselves.

The subject of Polychromy was not a mere question of curiosity, or pedantic antiquarian research, but it was one of great importance in their daily practice as architects, now that there was an increased demand for the employment of colour in the decoration of houses. The general use of colour by the Egyptians was well known. The taste of the Romans was a reflection of that of the Egyptians and the Greeks, and in their architectural remains colour was universally to be traced, whilst the vases of the ancients afforded abundant proof of its employment in another branch of art. In the Middle Ages buildings were profusely decorated, not by the timid trials of inexperienced taste, but with the utmost boldness of crude, but glowing, colouring and gilding. A coloured monument in a mediæval building now appeared a spot upon the plain stone-work, but it should be remembered that the whole of these edifices were originally decorated with colour, so as to render the accessories in harmony with the grand mass, in order to ensure the general effect. With regard to the modern use of Polychromy, Mr. Donaldson referred to the instances of the British Museum, the sculptures in which had received new life and animation by the coloured back-grounds introduced under the direction of Mr. Sydney Smirke. The ceilings of the sculpture galleries in the Museum had also been skilfully decorated, in unison with the walls, and it was at length possible, in some degree, to estimate the effect of such embellishments in Greek buildings. Mr. Donaldson here read a communication from Mr. Smirke containing the following passage:—

"Whatever doubt may still hang about the question of external painting in Greek architecture, there need, at least, be none on the subject of interior polychromy. I do not suppose that any one doubts as to the lavish use of colour within the Greek temple. There was, indeed, a sort of necessity for this, in order to bring into harmony the various natural hues of the raw materials used in its construction, the wood, stone, marble, and metal; moreover, the habit of constantly burning lamps, as a religious rite, would engender so much soot, that a periodic renewal of the surface decorations must have been an absolute necessity. The smoke nuisance was, you know, so great, owing perhaps to the imperfect nature of their lamps, that the atrium of a Roman's house became so named after it. I cannot imagine how ever we should have sunk, in these days, into such imbecility as regards the use of positive colours; in England, too, whose painters have long been the best colourists in Europe. But the eighteenth century was truly the Bozotian period of our art, and when the discovery of Greek excellence awoke in us new and higher feelings, the attention of architectural students was absorbed in the study of beautiful outlines and wonderful forms: it was not till long after, that the use of colour among the Greeks

became an object of particular notice and research. Let the student inquire why the blossom of the rose never looks so charming, as when contrasted with its own green leaves; and why the purple and yellow streaks on the corolla of the pansy make that humble little plant one of the most lovely; and let him observe with admiration the consummate skill with which the great instructors will cause peace and harmony to prevail between the most hostile tints, and by her magic touch will convert horrid discords—the greens and the oranges—the browns and the purples—into new sources of beauty and pleasure."

Mr. Penrose, Fellow, said, that although his studies at Athens had been directed rather to form than to colour, it was impossible to live, as he had, for many months under the shadow of the Parthenon and the Theseum without making some observations on the colouring of these temples. On one point in Mr. Donaldson's paper he must venture entirely to differ with him, viz. with respect to the painting of the echinus of the Doric capital. He was quite satisfied there was no painting whatever on the echinus. Then, in regard to the epitrachelium, as he would call it,—not the hypotrachelium,—the hollow curve above the small necking (the hypotrachelium being below it), he believed that that member also had not been painted in the Parthenon. He agreed with Mr. Donaldson in thinking that the cases of the doors were of bronze at the Parthenon, and that the doors were of the same material. Proceeding to consider the subject generally, Mr. Penrose said that its importance was quite evident. The architecture of the Greeks could not be thoroughly understood without studying their polychromy. A considerable advance had been made in that study, especially in M. Hittorf's work. From the nature of our climate, and even from our very veneration of the Greeks, we might be loath to admit their use of polychromy. A juster feeling, however, should make us feel that they had attained the same perfection in painting as in other arts; and we should rather doubt our own knowledge of what they did than their excellence in art. That colour was employed on the Greek temples it was impossible to doubt: the remains of it on the Parthenon were in such a state of preservation, and so correct in point of form, that the main fact was unquestionable. Mr. Penrose referred to some painted fragments discovered in an excavation made near the south-east angle of the Parthenon, and described by Mr. Bracebridge. These were coloured red, blue, and yellow, and, in his opinion, were of earlier date than the Parthenon, and, no doubt, fragments of the temples destroyed by the Persians. This might have been the site of the workshops for the builders of the present Parthenon; and, indeed, among the remains, a closed jar containing colours was found. With regard to the limits of Polychromy, he was decidedly in favour of some limits, and thought that the surfaces which were coloured were comparatively small, especially in the shade; but still, though the principal remains of colours were to be found on the soffits, there were faint lines of patterns having been used on some very exposed parts, as on the tenia and regula of the architrave, sufficient, indeed, to lead to the belief that if the abacus, or echinus, or architrave had been painted, traces of such painting also would be found. If the views of M. Semper and others, as to the use of tablets, were correct, he did not think a particular building at Athens would have been called the Pinacotheca, or the Hall of Tablet Pictures. The earlier columns of Greek temples were of limestone, and these were invariably coated with a fine stucco; but when marble was used, as at Athens, of the finest and most expensive kind, it was difficult to suppose that it would have been covered with stucco.

M. Semper then addressed the meeting, and so did M. Horeau. The latter said,—In modern times improvements in the industrial arts offered here, and on the continent, a wide field for architectural embellishments; as, for instance, in the various stuccos, in the fictile wares, and in the extended application and combination of the metals.

Mr. W. R. Hamilton said that his knowledge

of Greek Architecture referred to a period when it would have been considered absolutely sacrilege to ornament the idea, that any one of those exquisite temples could have been decorated with colour. He thought it very probable that the temples of rough stone were coloured, but not those of marble; or at all events not to any great extent.

Mr. Twining, Visitor, begged to offer a few observations on the practical application of polychromy to modern works, and to give some reasons why it should be very sparingly applied, especially in this country. If all materials, rough stone, white marble, and the more beautiful coloured marbles, such as those in the Duomo and Campanile of Florence, were to be painted, all distinction as to the relative value would be lost. Climate was also an essential consideration, and colours which would stand, and have a good effect in Greece, would not suit the climate of England. There was a danger, also, of painted decorations taking the place of carving and sculpture, which were so much more beautiful and valuable.

Mr. Fergusson considered the subject would be incomplete without some reference to the use of colour in Assyria, where the recent discoveries had brought to light paintings, and painted architecture, to an extent not found anywhere else except in Egypt. Whilst, however, the Egyptian paintings were intended to express words and ideas, colour was applied in Assyria, as in Greece, to add to the beauty and decoration of the palaces and temples. Honey-suckles, ovolos, acrolis, and other ornaments, usually called Greek, were found in Assyria, and were coloured precisely as those given in the Greek restorations before the meeting. The specimen exhibited from Metapontum, might indeed have come from Nineveh. The Ionic capital also, with its volutes, was essentially Assyrian, and it was coloured as the one now shown. There was no trace of the Doric in Assyria; but all the Ionic mouldings and ornaments were found, and they were all coloured. Some of them were enamelled upon bricks and plaster. These discoveries were of the greatest importance in relation to the question of polychromy, being in fact the authority for its employment by the Greeks; and a proper study of them would go far to throw light upon the question.

To the discussion on the second evening we will return hereafter.

RAILING AT HOME AND ABROAD.

CONSOLATION FOR ENGLISHMEN.

I LEFT London in the midst of the bustle consequent on the Great Exhibition. Every newspaper was full of the heroic complaints of some traveller who had been detained "ten minutes or more" by an express train, because some vagrant excursionist would come to town by cheap return tickets. Well, no doubt some of the complaints were justifiable, but, whether or no, I determined to take a note of the comforts incidental to continental railway travelling, and contrast them with the miseries of such matters at home. Our route was through Belgium, up the Rhine, and thence on to Italy. The first "little affair" was at the Calais station. It is necessary to say at starting, that everywhere but in England, you have to pay for all luggage separately. Now, while this gives no greater security to the traveller, it causes him much trouble and vexation, besides adding amazingly to the length of the journey, seeing that he must be at the station from one quarter to three quarters of an hour earlier than in England. Arrived at the station, the baggage is placed on a counter, by no means large enough to hold the whole, till the methodical gentry on the other side weigh and ticket each piece. The space on the counter is so small to each party that he or she has to hold the pyramid together, and intreat the weighers to take their lot next. No rule exists as to "first come first served," so that you are galled by seeing some favourite commissionaire deposit a good cart-load twenty minutes after you have been waiting, and it is whipped off while you are in an agony of despair. But you are obliged to wait, and